

Testimony of H’Pun Mlo
Montagnard Refugee in North Carolina

House Committee on International Relations
Hearing on Human Rights Violations with Vietnam
March 29, 2006

The Honorable Chris Smith,
Chairman Subcommittee on Foreign Relations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is H’Pun Mlo, I am a Montagnard refugee and came to North Carolina on March 22, 2006, I am representative of all Montagnards living in North Carolina who are trying to get their families out of Vietnam.

First of all I would like to thank you Congressman Smith very much for the opportunity to share the situation of our Montagnard families in Vietnam, and I also would like to thank the members of the Human Rights Subcommittee for their interest and full consideration of the human rights violations and religious persecution in Vietnam and especially regarding the Montagnard people in the Central Highlands of Vietnam.

Currently, we need immediate help from the United States government because the Vietnamese authorities have refused to issue exit Visas for many of our Montagnard families in Vietnam’s Central Highlands.

The terrible abuse against our people of the Central Highlands is extremely difficult for Montagnards. Their lands have been taken, and the religious persecutions are objects of contempt.

The hostility of the Vietnamese government towards the Montagnards will never end without the intervention of the United States government. The local police and other security personnel continue to keep a very tight grip on the Montagnard people, and the situation has become gravely dangerous. If no help is provided to them from outsiders, their entire population will soon be eradicated.

The Vietnam government has announced that “the freedom of Religion is existed in its country”. But in reality it is not true. The freedom of religion of the Vietnamese government is **“House Church worship and free time read bible at home for only single families, but not allowing public worshipping at their own Churches”**. A maximum of two families can gather together for worship, but only if they first have permission from the local communist authorities. Since 1975, my village has not been allowed to build a church, and we can only worship at home. The Vietnamese communist government has set up their own church system for those who would like to practice their belief, but only under very restrictive state rules and monitoring including: submitting sermons for approval by local authorities, sermons have to be given in the Vietnamese language, only registered members can attend, and communist officials monitor church services. Currently, one platoon of regular arm stays permanent in my village to monitor all families who have husband in the United States of America.

Since 1975, there is no freedom of speech, freedom of information, or privately run media in Vietnam’s Central Highlands. The U.S. Officials and foreign media are required to obtain an authorization from the Foreign Ministry to travel to the Central Highlands, but they are not allowed to visit the Montagnard villages. For these reasons, today the Montagnards continue to cross Cambodia border because of their freedom of religion and lands rights.

Since my husband has participated in the protest on February 2, 2001, I have been imprisoned four times, and my family members were the target of the government and treated us as their enemy.

On September 3, 2003, Lieutenant Colonel Pham Huu Nhac, two high-ranking officers, **Major Nguyen Thanh That** and **Major Nguyen Van Phuc**, and a group of police, came to my house and arrested me and brought me to Ban Don District headquarters. They put me in jail and did not allow my five years old daughter to see me. During my ten days in prison, I was investigated every day, over and over about the protest.

On October 7, 2003, my brother, Y-Phor Mlo, was arrested and beaten so severely that he almost died because the police suspected that he was the one who reported to husband about my imprisonment.

On October 9, 2003, I was arrested again by the same group of the police because of two foreigners came to my commune asking for me.

On October 17, 03, I was released from jail. The police told me “First, if your husband sponsored your family, you have to show us all your husband documents. Second, you cannot meet or say anything to any foreigners who comes to your commune unless you are allowed by our local government.”

On July 16, 2005, I was arrested again because I was called for an interview by US Consulate General of Ho Chi Minh City. I was in jail for three days because of that.

On March 14, 2006, I was summoned to police headquarters and asked, “What do the Montagnards want?” I answered, “We want to be free to worship God and we need land for farming.” He answered, “We already granted the Montagnards freedom to worship.” He then threatened me, “when you go to the United States of America you can not say anything bad about the Vietnamese government. If you do, you can not come back to Vietnam because your family members are in our hands and we will use all our power against them.” They then made me sign a paper saying that I would not say anything bad about the Vietnamese government after leaving Vietnam.

Mr. Chairman, we came here today to tell you the truth about the Montagnard families and the situation the Montagnards are facing right now in Vietnam’s Central Highlands. We Montagnards are treated like enemies in our own homeland, and we pay a very high price for a life of freedom in the United States.

The Hanoi regime and their local government deeply hate and discriminate against Montagnards. Human rights abuses are never-ending for the Montagnards. We Montagnards have no freedom and have never known happiness throughout our generation.

Without outsiders pressure, the Hanoi government will never stop abusing the Montagnard people. I ask the US government to expedite the reunification families living in Vietnam with those who have been so fortunate to have been given asylum in the United States, for the longer they stay in Vietnam, the greater the danger they will face.

Again, thank you so much for privilege of testifying today. God bless you and bless America.

H’Pun Mlo